



Trail along old aqueduct

### Tips for Hikers

**Take the time to enjoy** your outdoor experience. Binoculars will help you observe the plants and animals as you walk quietly along the trails. A camera will preserve your memories of your visit.

**Carry water.** Hellhole Canyon can be very hot and dry, and there is no water available on the trails. For a full day’s hike, you could need at least one gallon of water in moderate temperatures. Do not drink from the stream.

If you are planning a longer hike, **carry light trail snacks.** They will help maintain your energy level.

**Wear suitable clothing and footgear.** Sturdy shoes and a hat are indispensable, and sunglasses, sunscreen, and insect repellent are highly recommended. Weather conditions can change rapidly, so be prepared for extremes.

**Tell a friend or family member** about your hiking plans. Be specific about your route and what time you should return. Hike with a companion.

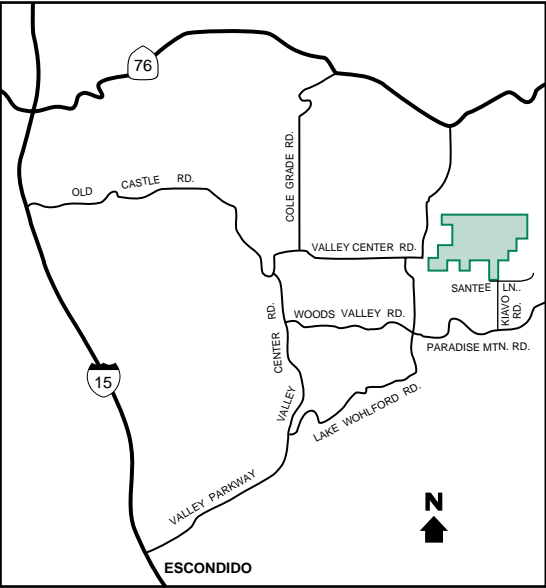
**Stay on the trails.** The natural resources of Hellhole are fragile. Their survival and your safety depend on correct trail etiquette. Don’t cut switchbacks – proper trail maintenance depends on proper trail use.

**Carry a first aid kit.** It can make the difference between an enjoyable hike and a potentially serious situation.

**Hellhole is a wilderness area.** Poison oak, bees, ticks, and rattlesnakes occur here naturally.

### Hellhole Canyon Open Space Preserve

19324 Santee Lane  
Valley Center, CA 92082



### Other County Open Space Preserves:

**El Capitan** Nearly 3,000 rugged, mountainous acres of dense chaparral and oak woodland. Located between Lakeside and the Barona Indian Reservation. Six-mile trail, one way, to El Cajon Mountain. Primitive — no water is available.

**Mt. Gower** Dense chaparral and scattered oak woodlands on 1,574 acres southeast of Ramona. Eight miles of trails. Restrooms, primitive group camping, and water at trailhead.

**Sycamore Canyon** Several miles of trails through shaded oak groves and dense chaparral. Located between Poway and Santee, off Highway 67.

*Preserve hours:  
8:00 a.m.  
to Sunset*



### Rules and Regulations for Open Space Preserves

**ACCIDENTS:** The County of San Diego shall not be responsible for loss or accidents.

**UNAUTHORIZED MOTOR VEHICLES:** The unauthorized operation of motor vehicles is prohibited.

**LITTERING:** Is prohibited.

**DEFACEMENT PROHIBITED:** No person shall remove, deface, or destroy trail markers, monuments, fences, trees, camp or picnic structures, or other preserve facilities.

**PRESERVATION OF TRAIL FEATURES:** All wildlife, plant, and geologic features are protected and are not to be damaged or removed. All historical artifacts are to be left in place.

**HORSES AND OTHER ANIMALS:** No horse or other animal shall be hitched to any tree, shrub, or structure in a manner that may cause damage to preserve property. No person shall ride, drive, lead, or keep a horse, except in areas specifically designated for such use.

**PETS:** Domestic pets are excluded from open-space preserves. Dogs accompanying the unsighted or deaf are excepted.

**NO HUNTING:** No person shall use, transport, carry, fire, or discharge any firearms, air guns, archery device, slingshot, fireworks, or explosive device of any kind in a preserve.

**ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES:** No intoxicating liquors having more than 20% alcohol by volume are permitted.

**FIRE HAZARDS AND SMOKING:** No smoking. Campfires are prohibited. Stoves allowed only in primitive group camping area.

Reneé E. Bahl, Director



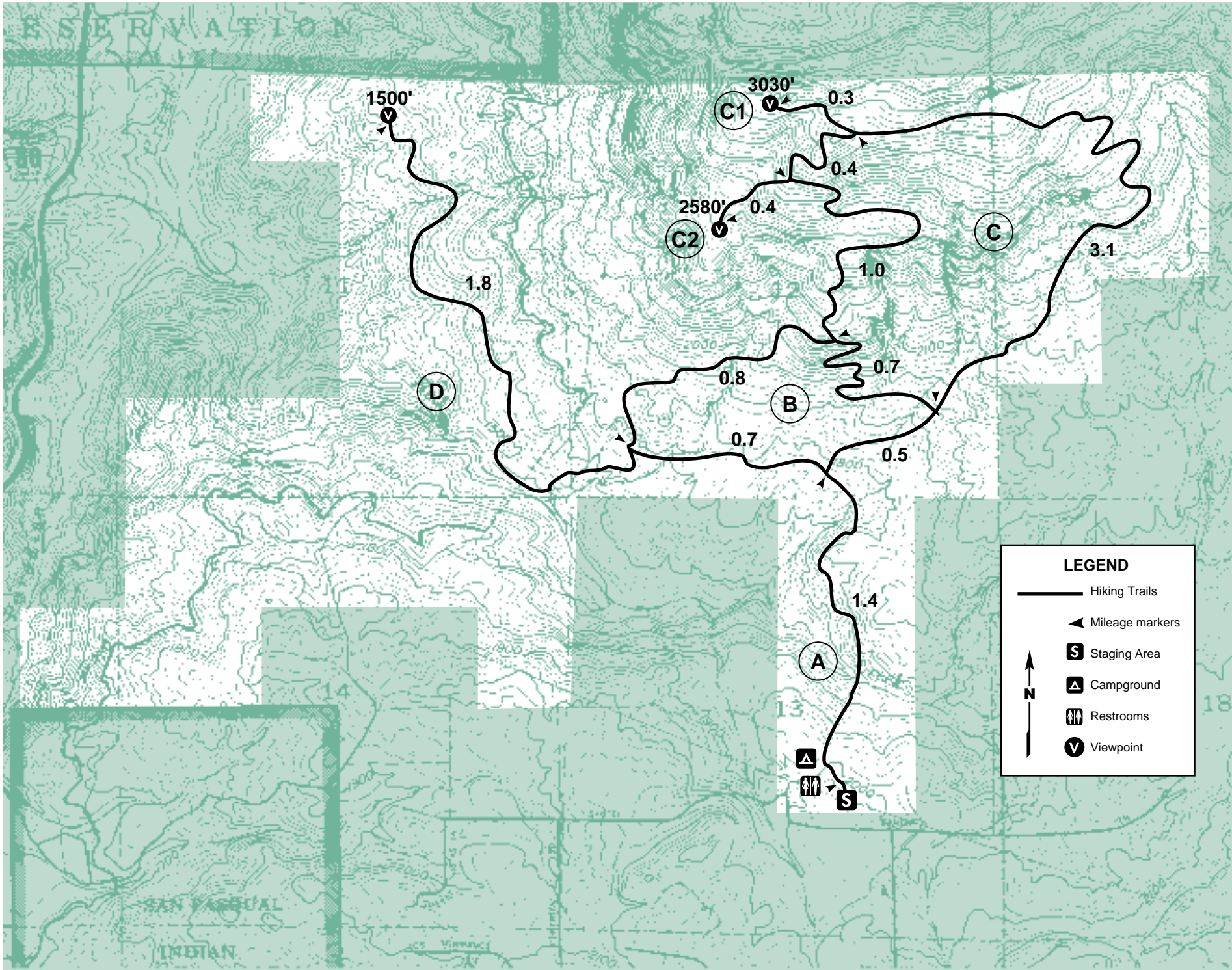
# Hellhole Canyon Open Space Preserve



## County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation

Reservations:  
2454 Heritage Park Row  
Old Town San Diego, CA 92110  
San Diego County (Toll free) (877) 565-3600  
Outside San Diego County (858) 565-3600  
Information: (858) 694-3049  
[www.sdparks.org](http://www.sdparks.org)





# Welcome to Hellhole Canyon Open Space Preserve

For those seeking to explore a pristine wilderness, Hellhole Canyon offers an accessible and interesting range of experiences. Visitors can take a short downhill stroll to an exquisite oak woodland, or they can attempt a rigorous climb to a mountaintop viewpoint and its sweeping panoramas. These are just two of many such discoveries in this rugged preserve.

Though Native Americans did not live in this canyon permanently, they did come here regularly to collect and grind acorns and other seeds for food. The colorful place names (Hell and Paradise Creeks, Horsethief Canyon) show that settlers also made use of the area. This wilderness was also the site for the historic Escondido Canal, traces of which are still clearly visible.

But as a 21st-century preserve, Hellhole Canyon has reverted back to its original inhabitants, the plants and animals of oak woodland and chaparral. Most of the park consists of dense mixed chaparral, characterized by scrub oak, manzanita, redberry, and ceanothus. Animal residents include mountain lions, coyotes, rattlesnakes, horned lizards, black-chinned sparrows, and Bewick’s wrens.

Facilities in the 1,712-acre preserve, which is crossed by 11 miles of hiking and equestrian trails, include a staging area, restrooms and drinking water, and primitive group camping area (available by reservation only).

Hikers and horseback riders have several options. The following descriptions correspond to the trails marked on the map.

- A** This trail descends rapidly through dense north-facing chaparral (toyon, scrub oak, and manzanita) to a beautiful riparian area. Remember that the steep descent means a steep return hike. Past the creek, the trail runs along the rock-lined bed of the Escondido Canal (which now takes a different route through the park). The 15-mile-long canal was built in 1895 to transport water from the San Luis Rey River to Lake Wohlford.
- B** This loop trail experiences moderate changes in elevation through open chaparral and grassland. The average hiker should have no problems on this trail.
- C** This strenuous loop is for the more advanced hiker. To minimize the severe change in elevation, we recommend hiking this loop in a counterclockwise direction. The south-facing slope is drier and more exposed than Trail A, and the vegetation community, chamise chaparral, reflects that difference.
- C1** Viewpoint C1 offers a magnificent view of the San Luis Rey River Valley.
- C2** Viewpoint C2 looks down on Hell Creek.
- D** A view of Paradise Creek awaits the hiker at the end of this trail. Although the changes in elevation are moderate, this trail through chaparral is totally exposed and is very hot in summer; the hike is not recommended during the warm months of the year. This trail passes under the siphon portion of the Escondido Canal. The siphon is privately owned; **do not trespass on it.**

**NOTE:** Bicycles are not allowed on trails within Hellhole Canyon Open Space Preserve.

